

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE			Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188		
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1. REPORT DATE XX-10-2010		2. REPORT TYPE Technical		3. DATES COVERED (From - To) Jun 2010	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES LANGUAGE AND CULTURE NEEDS ASSESSMENT: CULTURAL AWARENES AND KNOWLEDGE TRAINING			5a. CONTRACT NUMBER USZA22-02-D-0015		
			5b. GRANT NUMBER		
			5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER		
6. AUTHOR(S) SWA Consulting Inc			5d. PROJECT NUMBER		
			5e. TASK NUMBER		
			5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER		
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) SWA Consulting Inc 311 S. Harrington St. Suite 200 Raleigh, NC 27603 SWA was a subcontractor to Gemini Industries, Inc. under Contract # USZA22-02-D-0015			8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER 2010011042		
9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Special Operations Forces Culture and Language Office HQ USSOCOM Attn: SOKL-J7—SOFLO 7701 Tampa Point Blvd MacDill AFB, FL 33621-5323			10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S) SOFLO		
			11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)		
12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT A. Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT This study is one component of the Special Operations Forces (SOF) Language and Culture Needs Assessment Project. The larger study consisted of 23 focus groups conducted across the SOF community and an issue-oriented web-based survey. This report documents the current state of culture training in the SOF community from the perspectives of SOF operators and leaders. SOF operators described participating in a variety of culture training experiences. Essentially, there does not appear to be consistency in the type of culture training received. For example, some operators and leaders described formal training events (e.g., immersion experiences, classroom training) whereas others described informal training events (e.g., on-the-job experience). Additionally, the format (e.g., varying training lengths) and perceived effectiveness of culture training also varied. SOF operators and leaders provided suggestions for culture training, including culture training length, when it should occur, and how its importance should be promoted in the community.					
15. SUBJECT TERMS culture training, cultural awareness, cultural knowledge, SOF, training effectiveness, needs assessment					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT UU (SAR)	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 48	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON Surface, Eric A.
a. REPORT U	b. ABSTRACT U	c. THIS PAGE U			19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER (include area code) 919-480-2751



Special Operations Forces Language and Culture Needs Assessment: Cultural Knowledge and Awareness Training



NOVEMBER 2010

APPROVED FOR PUBLIC RELEASE;

DISTRIBUTION UNLIMITED

SPONSORED BY: SOFLO, USSOCOM

RESEARCH CONDUCTED BY: SWA CONSULTING INC.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

“I would just sum it up by saying that—your knowledge of the culture is directly proportional to your mission’s success. It’s that simple.”

SOF Operator, 4th Military Information Support Group (MISG)¹

The United States Special Operations Command’s (USSOCOM) vision is to have, “Forces [that] are culturally attuned warriors...able to blend into the operational environment and build relations across diverse cultures” (USSOCOM M 350-8, 2009, p. 1). In order to meet SOF operators’ culture-related mission requirements and fulfill the vision of having culturally savvy personnel, the SOF community needs effective methods for developing cultural capability. This report provides SOF leaders and those involved with the design and delivery of SOF culture training programs an overall picture of what the current state of culture training in the SOF community looks like, so if necessary, further investigation at the program or training event level can take place and improvements made to culture training programs.²

Currently, the USSOCOM language training manual (M 350-8, 2009) states that the bulk of culture training should occur in initial acquisition training (IAT) at a SOF training institution and not at the unit. Additionally, the USSOCOM manual states that at least 40 hours of mixed language and culture instruction should occur prior to every deployment. While SOF operators may be exposed to culture training as part of their official or required language training, SOF operators often deploy outside of their area of responsibility (AOR) where they have neither language skills nor cultural knowledge. The SOF community has a responsibility to provide SOF operators with culture training regardless of deployment location (inside or outside the AOR) in the form of pre-deployment training (PDT). Therefore, it is important to assess the current state of culture training to ensure that SOF operators receive culture training that prepares them for their culture-related mission requirements.

Overview of Findings

SOF operators and leaders have different views related to whether or not SOF operators received culture training. Specifically, less than 30% of SOF operators indicated receiving culture training, while nearly 75% of SOF leaders indicated culture training participation of their units. This difference in perception between SOF operators and leaders was most pronounced in the United States Army Special Operations Command (USASOC), with Army SOF operators indicating 27% participation, while Army SOF leaders indicated 82%. Other SOF components, despite low participation in the survey, indicated less extreme differences in the receipt of culture training between SOF operators and leaders (e.g., 50% of Naval Special Warfare Command [WARCOM] operators surveyed indicated participation, compared to 36% of surveyed WARCOM leaders).

¹ Formerly 4th Psychological Operations Group (POG)

² This study was a needs assessment and not designed to be an evaluation of specific culture training programs or events. These suggestions were from the surveyed SOF community as an overview of the current state of culture training. Training evaluation is most appropriately done in relation to a specific training event. Further evaluation conducted at the individual program level is needed to know specifically what improvements are needed for each individual cultural training event.

SOF operators and leaders further perceived differences in culture training length, such that operators reported significantly shorter training duration than leaders (Section II presents more detailed information). These conflicting perceptions in training suggest that SOF operators and leaders may conceptualize culture training differently. Through examination of culture training descriptions, SOF leader perceptions of culture training include almost exclusively descriptions of informal learning opportunities (e.g., on-the-ground or on-the-job learning).

“it is passed on from the more senior soldier's experience.”

SOF Leader, 5th Special Forces Group (SFG)

SOF operator descriptions of culture training, on the other hand, focused more on formal training (e.g., structured culture training within a language training program).

“A basic PowerPoint on social structure done by military academics”

SOF Operator, 1st SFG

Consistent with research indicating that there are positive aspects of formal and informal training (Littrell & Salas, 2005), the different perceptions of culture training structure still led SOF operators and leaders to agree that the culture training currently provided is *moderately effective* to *effective*. However, as very few SOF operators and leaders indicated that their most recent training was *very effective*, results suggest that there is room for improvement in the current training. Further, SOF operators' and leaders' perceptions of culture training effectiveness increased as the length of the culture training experience increased. Not surprisingly then, one of the most commonly suggested improvements for culture training by both SOF operators and leaders on the survey and in focus groups was to provide longer and/or more culture training opportunities.

“Needs to be longer to adequately cover all the material...Most soldiers don't have the discipline to study material on their own.”

SOF Operator, 95th Civil Affairs Brigade (CA Bde)

SOF operators and leaders provided many other suggestions to improve the current state of culture training as well (see Figure 12, p. 20). The most frequently provided suggestion by both SOF operators and leaders on the survey was for SOF operators to receive more immersion training opportunities. Immersion training was also described by focus group participants as one of the more effective culture training learning experiences.

“Spend the money, build a place where we can do full immersion training, and send everyone that needs to go.”

SOF Operator, 4th MISG

One of the unique aspects of immersion training is the ability to incorporate both informal and formal learning opportunities. Specifically, immersion training can combine both classroom learning with experiential, informal learning experiences. Research suggests that informal learning (e.g., on-the-job) is most effective when it takes place in combination with formal training (e.g., classroom training; Dale &

Bell, 1999); therefore, immersion training may be a useful suggestion for administration to consider in future culture training design.

Another common suggestion provided by SOF operators and leaders regarded the placement of culture awareness and knowledge training. Specifically, suggestions described including culture training into the language training or pre-deployment training (PDT or Pre-Mission Training, PMT). Further, best practice research suggests that training proximity to the event enhances results (Littrell & Salas, 2005). Current USSOCOM policies already stipulate culture training inclusion during language and PDT. With both SOF operators and leaders suggesting this be implemented into current practice, there may be a gap between policy and current culture training practice. Further investigation should examine this gap.

“The classes need to be incorporated throughout PMT, not just a once over Afghanistan or Iraq in a few hours. Training must incorporate language, culture, norms, customs, etiquette, religion, etc as to how not offend the local ethnicities.”

SOF Leader, 10th SFG

SOF leaders also mentioned the need for increase command emphasis on culture training. Survey comments highlighted several barriers that inhibit operators from receiving culture training. The most frequently discussed barrier was the lack of time to commit to culture training in relation to other training requirements, which is also a major barrier for language training. Best practice research suggests that programs are most effective when supported by leadership within the institution, and time dedicated to its execution (Dale & Bell, 1999).

“Group and Battalion Command emphasis on cultural training is the first step.”

SOF Leader, 4th MISG

Given the comments from the SOF community about improving culture training, the effectiveness of the training for SOF operators to become “culturally attuned” can likely be improved. Keeping in mind practical and other logistical constraints, not all these suggestions may be appropriate or feasible for the entire SOF community. More research focused on specific culture training events in the SOF community is needed for more definitive recommendations. The findings and suggestions from SOF operators and leaders from this report along with findings from two other *Tier I* reports, *Training Emphasis: Language and Culture* and *Inside/Outside AOR Use of Cultural Knowledge*, are integrated into a *Tier II* report, *Culture Training Guidance*. The *Tier II* report provides a more comprehensive view of suggestions for culture training improvement. Therefore, any suggestions provided in this report are contingent on further examination of the information presented in the *Training Emphasis: Language and Culture* and *Inside/Outside AOR Use of Cultural Knowledge* reports.

For questions or more information about the SOFLO and this project, please contact Mr. Jack Donnelly (john.donnelly@socom.mil). For specific questions related to data collection or reports associated with this project, please contact Dr. Eric A. Surface (esurface@swa-consulting.com) or Dr. Reanna Poncheri Harman (rpharman@swa-consulting.com) with SWA Consulting Inc.

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SECTION I: REPORT AND PROJECT OVERVIEW

Cultural Awareness and Knowledge Training Report Purpose

Special Operations Forces (SOF) operators need cultural awareness and knowledge on their missions. Respondents to the *2009 SOF Language and Culture Needs Assessment (LCNA)* survey provided information about their culture training experiences and/or the culture training currently available. Additionally, respondents provided suggestions for culture training improvement.

Section II of this report describes the current state of culture training, including the percent of those who reported receiving it, as well as the training's length and perceived effectiveness. Section III presents comments from the field including, the type of culture training received, barriers to attending training, why SOF operators and leaders are satisfied or dissatisfied with their training, and suggestions for improving their current training. Section IV describes effective and ineffective aspects of recent culture training experiences. Section V concludes the report by integrating main findings from each section and providing best practice research for future action. Appendix A describes the *2009 SOF LCNA Project*, and Appendix B provides an overview of report methodology, including participants, measures, and analyses. Appendix C presents SOF operator survey responses by SOF component and USASOC organization. Appendix D presents SOF leader survey responses by SOF component and USASOC organization. Appendix E includes survey comment themes, definitions, and examples.

LCNA Project Purpose

The Special Operations Forces Language Office (SOFLO) commissioned the *2009 SOF LCNA Project* to gain insights on language and culture capability and issues across the USSOCOM. The goal of this organizational-level needs assessment is to inform strategy and policy to ensure SOF personnel have the language and culture skills needed to conduct their missions effectively. Data were collected between March and November, 2009 from personnel in the SOF community, including SOF operators and leaders. Findings, gathered via focus groups and a web-based survey, will be presented in a series of reports divided into three tiers. The specific reports in each of these tiers will be determined and contracted by the SOFLO. *Tier I* reports focus on specific, limited issues (e.g., *Inside AOR Use of Language*). *Tier II* reports integrate and present the most important findings across related *Tier I* reports (e.g., *Use of Language and Culture on Deployment*), while including additional data and analysis on the topic. One *Tier III* report presents the most important findings, implications, and recommendations across all topics explored in this project. The remaining *Tier III* reports present findings for specific SOF organizations [e.g., Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC), Special Forces (SF) Command]. Two foundational reports document the methodology and participants associated with this project. Report topics are determined by the SOFLO and are subject to change.

Relationship of Culture Awareness and Knowledge Training to the LCNA Project

The *Cultural Awareness and Knowledge Training* report is a *Tier I* report that will be integrated with other *Tier I* reports, *Training Emphasis: Language and Culture* and *Inside/Outside AOR Use of Cultural*

Knowledge, into a *Tier II* report, *Culture Training Guidance* (Appendix A presents the report structure). However, the final reports produced will be determined by the SOFLO and are subject to change.

This report differs from the *Inside/Outside AOR Use of Cultural Knowledge* report because it examines the current state of culture training throughout the SOF community while the other report describes the use and need of cultural knowledge on missions.

SECTION II: CURRENT STATE OF CULTURAL TRAINING

USSOCOM manual (M 350-8, 2009) provides guidelines for foreign language and cultural training in the SOF community. The manual states that the bulk of culture training should occur in initial acquisition training (IAT) at a SOF training institution and not at the unit. Additionally, the USSOCOM manual states that at least 40 hours of mixed language and culture instruction should occur prior to every deployment. While specific questions regarding pre-deployment language and culture training are covered in *Inside/Outside AOR Use of Cultural Knowledge* (Technical Report #2010011008), this section describes the state of culture training in the SOF community,³ including surveyed SOF operators' most recent culture training experiences, which could include pre-deployment training, unit training, or initial acquisition training (IAT). Specifically, this section details reported training locations, training length, and perceived training effectiveness. Additionally, this section presents SOF leaders' descriptions of culture training that operators in their units receive. The SOF leaders whose operators do not receive culture training also described how effective they perceived culture training would be for operators in their unit.

Research Questions

This section addresses the following questions:

- Do SOF operators receive culture training?
- Where do SOF operators participate in culture training?
- How long is the culture training SOF operators receive?
- How effective do SOF operators and leaders perceive the culture training to be?
- For SOF leaders whose operators do not receive culture training, how effective do they perceive that culture training would be for operators in their unit?

Main Findings

Perceptions differed between SOF operators and leaders about whether or not SOF operators participated in culture training. Overall, less than 30% of SOF operators reported they received culture training, while nearly 75% of SOF leaders reported their unit received culture training. This difference in SOF operator and leader perception is most pronounced within the United States Army Special Operations Command (USASOC).

SOF operators and leaders also reported different training lengths. SOF leaders reported that their operators received significantly longer training than SOF operators, with SOF leaders more frequently indicating that culture training lasted *more than one week*. SOF operators were also asked about the location of their training. Most SOF operators who receive culture training, (81%, $n = 273$) indicated they received it at a military location (e.g., Fort Bragg, Hurlburt Field, Fort Campbell).

³ When referring to the SOF community, this report focuses only on the SOF operators and unit leaders who participated in the survey and responded to these specific items. Please see Appendix B (Methodology) and the *Participation Report* (Technical Report #2010011003) for more information about survey respondents.

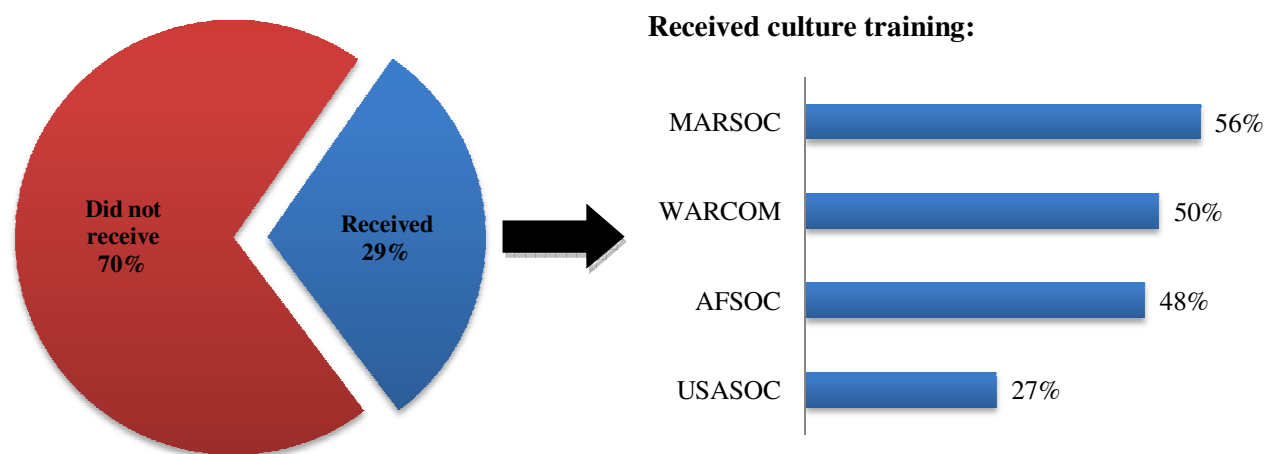
Although SOF operators and leaders differed in their perceptions of their receipt and length of culture training, SOF operators and leaders agreed that the culture training provided ranged from *moderately effective* to *effective*. SOF leaders whose units did not receive culture training reported that culture training *would be effective* for their unit if it were provided, highlighting their awareness of the importance of culture training. While those that did receive culture training perceived it as effective, very few SOF operators and leaders described it as *very effective*. This suggests that there may be room for improvement in the current training.

Detailed Findings

Receipt of Culture Training

Twenty-nine percent ($n = 331$) of the 1,144 SOF operators who responded indicated they received culture training sponsored by the military or government (Figure 1, p. 9). The percentage of operators who received culture training was higher for Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC; 48%, $n = 10$), Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command (MARSOC; 56%, $n = 9$), and Naval Special Warfare Command (NAVSPECWARCOM or WARCOM; 50%, $n = 4$), compared to the United States Army Special Operations Command (USASOC; 27%, $n = 220$). Caution should be taken when interpreting these conclusions because of low sample sizes for the non-USASOC components.

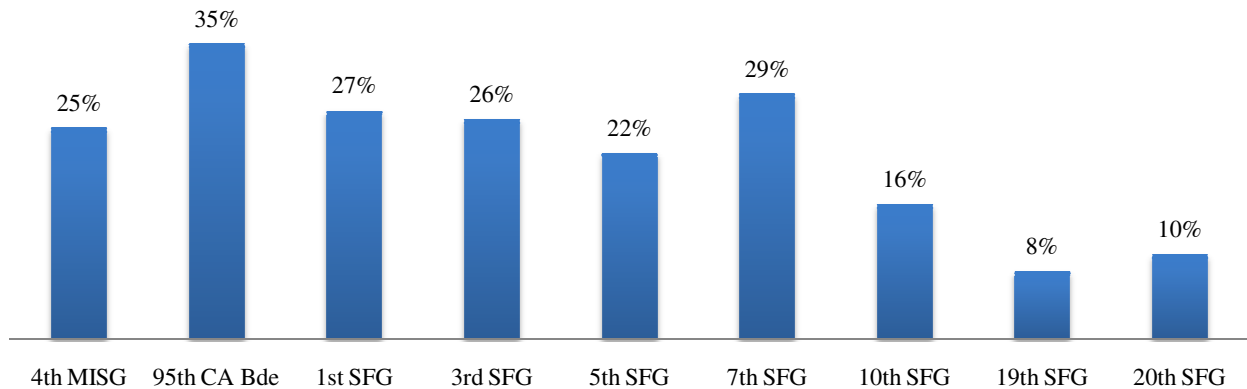
Figure 1. SOF Operator Receipt of Culture Training



Note. Total $n = 1,144$.

Within USASOC, SOF operators from certain organizations reported higher receipt of culture training than others (Figure 2, p. 10), such that 95th Civil Affairs Brigade (CA Bde) operators (35%, $n = 54$) reported the highest percentage receiving culture training, while the reserve units (19th and 20th Special Forces Group [SFG]) reported the lowest percentages (8%, $n = 1$ and 10%, $n = 3$, respectively).

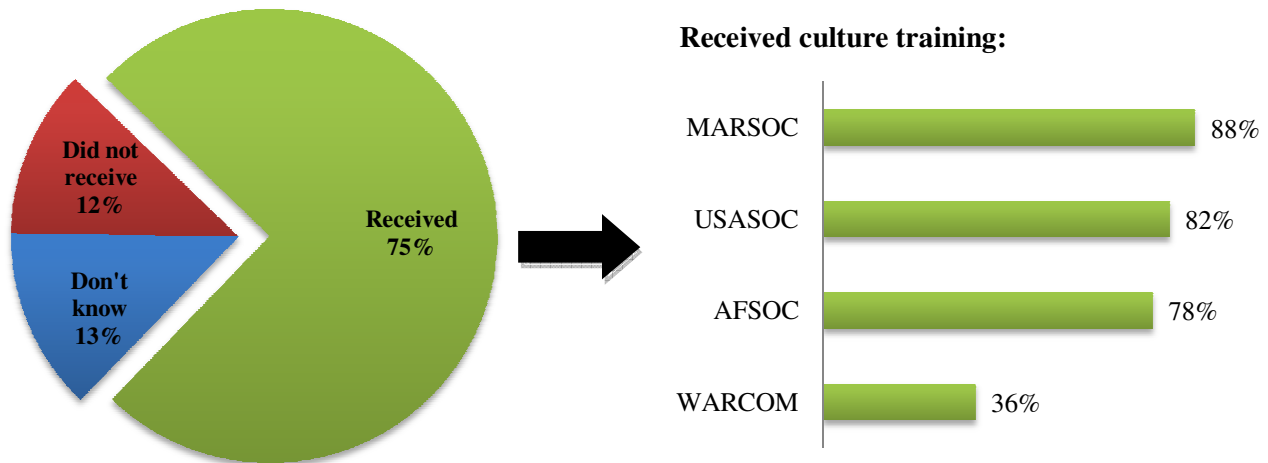
Figure 2. USASOC Operator Receipt of Culture Training



Note. MISG = Military Information Support Group, CA Bde = Civil Affairs Brigade, SFG = Special Forces Group.

SOF leaders reported their operators received considerably more culture training than SOF operators indicated, such that 75% ($n = 640$) indicated that operators in their units receive culture training (Figure 3, p. 10).⁴ Most SOF components (i.e., AFSOC, MARSOC, USASOC) perceived similar amounts of culture training occurring at their units (between 78-82%); however, WARCOC leaders (36%, $n = 4$) reported significantly less culture training than other components.⁵

Figure 3. SOF Leader Reports of Culture Training



Note. The “Received” percentage includes SOF leaders who indicated that operators in their units receive culture training, regardless of whether or not they could comment on the culture training itself. See Appendix B: Methodology for explanation.

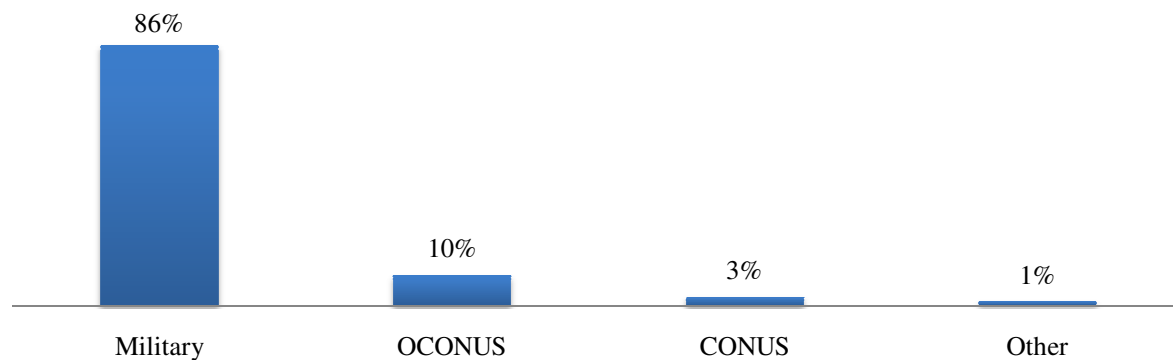
⁴ Of the 75% ($n = 640$) only 37% ($n = 235$) of respondent reported they could comment on the training and responded to the rest of the culture training questions.

⁵ Due to the small number of WARCOC, AFSOC, and MARSOC operators and leaders who responded to the survey, conclusions about the broader community for each of these SOF components is cautioned.

Location of Training

Most SOF operators (86%, $n = 236$) received training at a military location (e.g., “Fort Leavenworth”, “Fort Bragg”, “Fort Benning”). Few SOF operators received culture training OCONUS (10%, $n = 27$), or at a location within the CONUS (4%), but not in a military location or at other locations (Figure 4, p. 11).

Figure 4. Culture Training Location

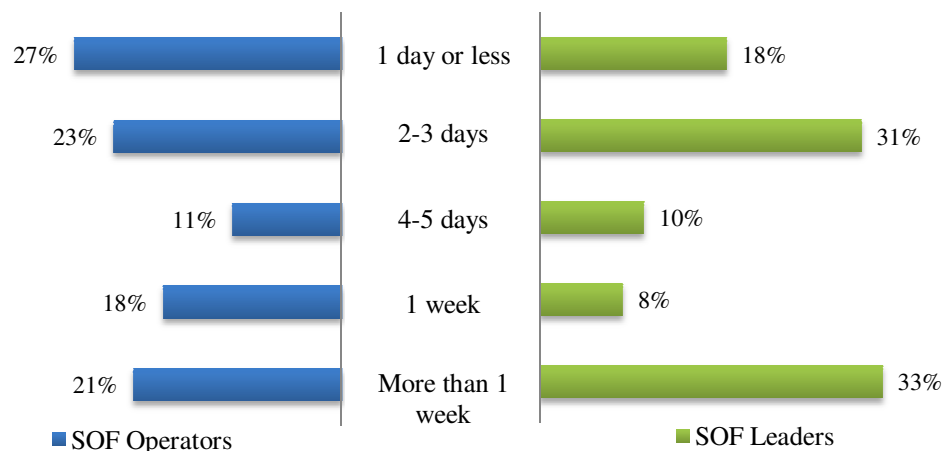


Note. SOF operator responses.

Culture Training Length

Both SOF operators and leaders reported culture training ranged from *a day or less* to *more than a week* in length (Figure 5, p. 11). SOF leaders reported significantly longer training than SOF operators, such that 33% of SOF leaders ($n = 76$) indicated that culture training lasted *more than a week*, compared to 21% of SOF operators ($n = 68$).

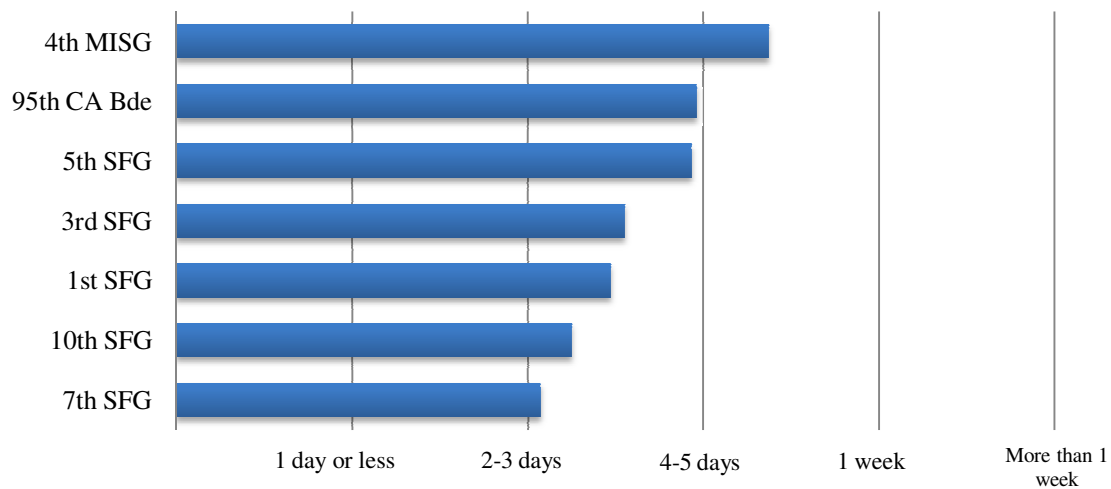
Figure 5. Culture Training Length



Note. SOF operator $n = 320$, $M = 2.82$. SOF leader $n = 233$, $M = 3.06$. Sample sizes, means, and response frequencies for SOF components and USASOC organizations are presented in Appendices C and D.

Culture training length also differed across USASOC organizations such that 4th MISG operators reported significantly longer culture training ($M = 3.37$, $n = 32$) than 7th SFG operators ($M = 2.07$, $n = 28$; Figure 6, p. 12).

Figure 6. Average Reported Culture Training Length by USASOC Organization

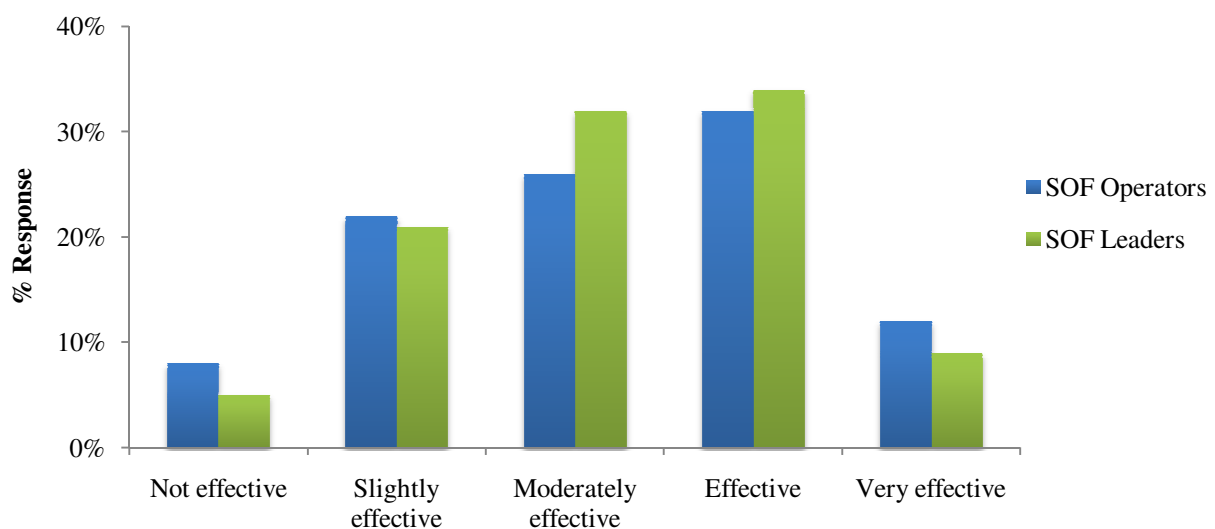


Note. The figure displays the means of each group. Only SOF operator responses are included. Sample sizes and response frequencies are presented in Appendix C. 19th SFG and 20th SFG are not included due to small sample size.

Culture Training Effectiveness

Both SOF operators and leaders reported that the culture training they (or their units) received was *effective* (Figure 7, p. 12). However, very few thought that culture training was *very effective*, therefore, there is room for improvement in the current training received.

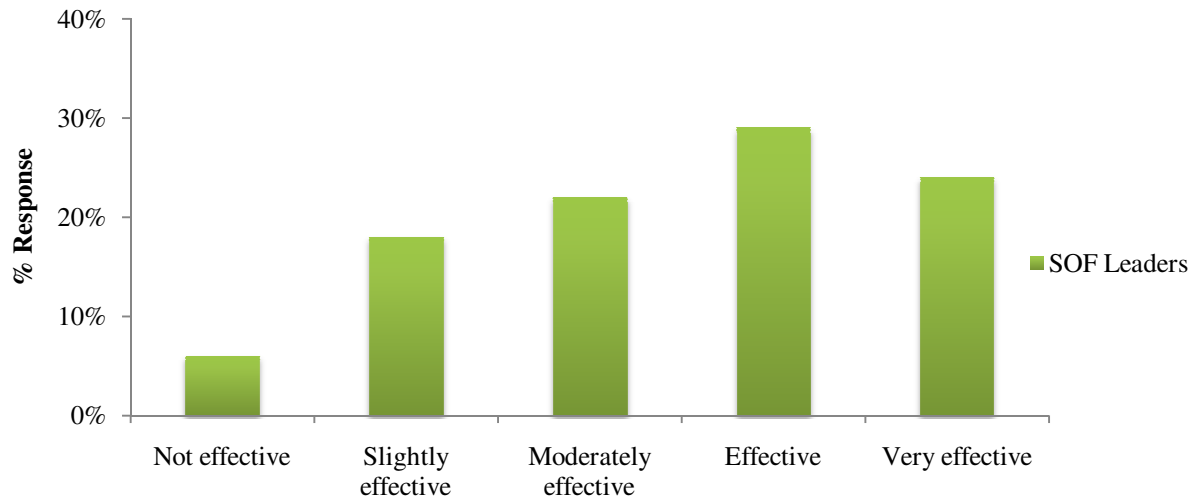
Figure 7. Culture Training Effectiveness Ratings



Note. SOF operator $n = 319$, $M = 3.19$. SOF leader $n = 233$, $M = 3.22$.

For SOF leaders whose units do *not* receive culture training, indicated that culture training would be *effective* or *very effective* (Figure 8, p. 13).

Figure 8. Potential Culture Training Effectiveness



Note. $n = 98$, $M = 3.47$. Responses by SOF component and USASOC organization are presented in Appendix D, Tables 5 and 6.

The length of the training had an influence on its perceived effectiveness, such that SOF operators who indicated longer culture training (e.g., 4-5 days; 1 week; more than 1 week) reported higher effectiveness ratings than those who indicated shorter training experiences (i.e., 1 day or less; 2-4 days; Table 1, p. 13). This pattern was also found in SOF leader responses (Table 2, p. 14).

Table 1. SOF Operator Perceptions of Effectiveness and Length of Training

		Length of Culture Training				
		1 day or less	2-3 days	4-5 days	1 week	More than 1 week
Effectiveness of Training	Not Effective	13%	8%	6%	4%	5%
	Slightly Effective	41%	22%	14%	9%	12%
	Moderately Effective	21%	40%	23%	29%	16%
	Effective	22%	26%	40%	49%	36%
	Very Effective	3%	4%	17%	9%	31%

Note. The total number (n) of SOF operator respondents = 317. The highlighted values are the highest percentages of effectiveness within a length category (e.g., 41% is the highest percentage in the 1 day or less training length category).

Table 2. SOF Leader Perceptions of Effectiveness and Length of Training

		Length of Culture Training				
		1 day or less	2-3 days	4-5 days	1 week	More than 1 week
Effectiveness of Training	Not Effective	19%	1%	9%	0%	0%
	Slightly Effective	37%	29%	22%	16%	4%
	Moderately Effective	26%	46%	26%	37%	23%
	Effective	19%	21%	35%	42%	52%
	Very Effective	0%	3%	9%	5%	21%

Note. The total number (*n*) of SOF leader respondents =232. The highlighted values are the highest percentages of effectiveness within a length category (e.g., 37% is the highest percentage in the *1 day or less* training length category).

SECTION III: COMMENTS FROM THE FIELD

This section presents survey comments from SOF operators and leaders regarding their most recent culture training experience, including barriers to the receipt of training and evaluations on what program characteristics were effective. Additionally, SOF operators and leaders provided suggestions for how to better improve future culture training events.⁶

Research Questions

This section addresses the following questions:

- What type of culture training do SOF operators receive?
- What prevents SOF operators from attending culture training?
- Why are SOF operators and leaders satisfied or dissatisfied with their culture training?
- What suggestions did SOF operators and leaders provide for improving culture training?

Main Findings

SOF operator and leader comments addressed: the type of training received (e.g., immersion, classroom), evaluation of the training received, and suggestions for improving culture training. The most popular suggestions included integrating culture training into language training and providing more immersion opportunities as cultural training. Overall, SOF leaders provided more open-ended responses ($n = 175$) than SOF operators ($n = 98$). SOF leaders provided comments similar to SOF operators, with the exception two suggestions for which SOF leaders commented and SOF operators did not: provide more command support and improve quality of resources (Figure 12, p. 20).

Regarding the descriptions about the type of culture training received, SOF leaders most frequently commented that operators in their units engaged in informal culture training, such as self-study and mentoring. SOF operators, however, most frequently indicated that they received classroom-based culture training, such as military or university courses.

SOF operator and leader comments provided both positive and negative feedback related to their (or their operators') experiences. Positive evaluations were more frequent than negative evaluations, but were less descriptive and often did not specify why the training was effective. Negative evaluations most often referred to issues with instruction. For example, some comments indicated that the instructor was too academic when teaching students about culture or the instructor did not use effective teaching methods. Additionally, materials were described as too general and not useful for the capacity in which SOF operators will use cultural awareness and knowledge on their missions.

SOF operators and leaders also provided suggestions for improving culture training. The most common suggestions were to provide more immersion and classroom training opportunities. Other common

⁶This study was a needs assessment and not designed to be an evaluation of specific culture training. These suggestions were from the surveyed SOF community as an overview of the current state of culture training. Training evaluation is most appropriately done in relation to a specific training event. Further evaluation conducted at the individual program level is needed to know specifically what improvements are needed for each individual cultural training event.

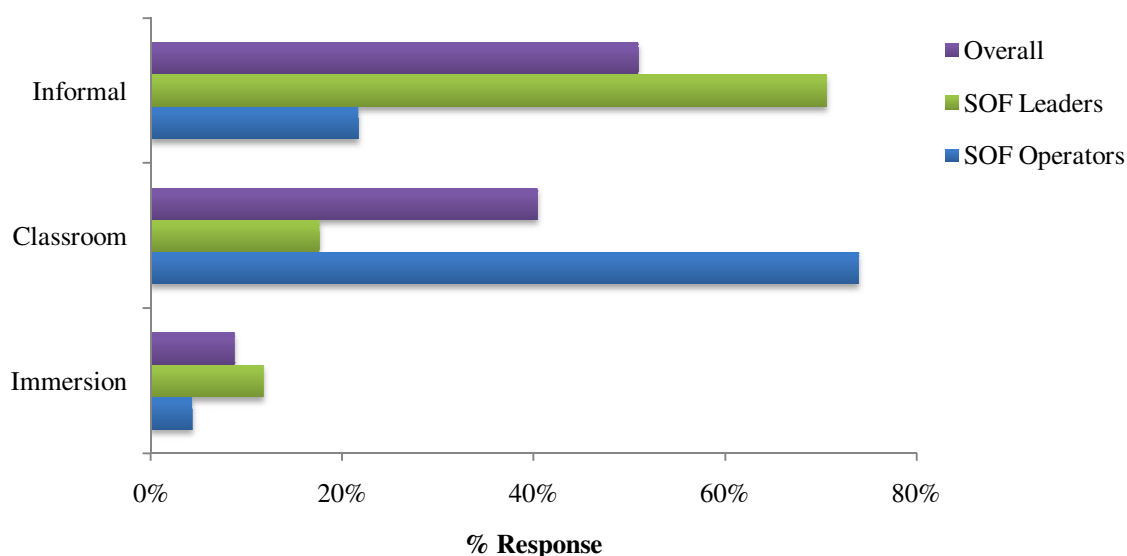
suggestions included integrating culture training into either language training or pre-mission training and placing increased emphasis from the chain of command on culture training.

Detailed Findings

Type of Training Received

Respondents describe their culture training as ranging from classroom training to cultural immersion training. SOF operators who responded indicated classroom training (74%, $n = 17$) most frequently, while SOF leaders indicated informal training (71%, $n = 24$) most frequently (Figure 9, p. 16).

Figure 9. Type of Culture Training Described in Open-ended Comments



Note. The percentages are based on the number of times a culture training type description was mentioned: Overall = 57; SOF Leaders = 34; SOF Operators = 23. Descriptions of code definitions are included in Appendix E. Frequency tables are included in Appendix F.

SOF operators. SOF operator descriptions included various training formats, ranging from classroom courses, briefings, and formal courses offered off-site. Also, some comments indicated that culture training was conducted during language training.

“Not only am I learning the language but we relate the language to the culture on a daily basis. The course is more than how to speak it has become when and what to say.”

SOF Operator, USASOC HQ

“The training was conducted in conjunction with previous language refresher and was divided into the separate lessons. It was effective.”

SOF Operator, Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC)

SOF leaders. The descriptions SOF leaders provided about culture training received by operators in their units included mostly informal training types like self-study, mentoring (e.g., SOF operator with

deployment experience passing along cultural knowledge), and on-the-job training during deployment. This perspective is different than that of SOF operators, who largely described classroom-based culture training experiences.

“There is so much experience across the Group with culture in our target area that culture training occurs constantly”

SOF Leader, 5th SFG

“we have enough personnel qualified to “train the trainer” in regards to culture training.”

SOF Leader, 3rd SFG

“most guys have enough deployments to the AOR that they know the culture well.”

SOF Leader, USSOCOM HQ

“This training is normally informal and is provided by other operators.”

SOF Leader, Deployed SO unit

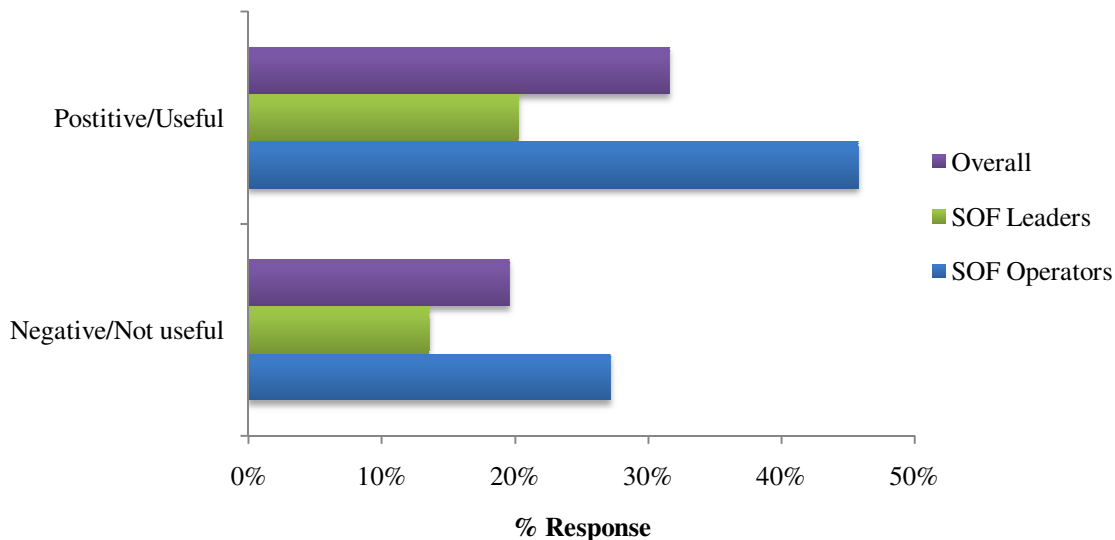
Culture Training Evaluation

Overall, most training descriptions were positive ($n = 42$; Figure 10, p. 17). For example, some respondents commented on the training’s usefulness, and others indicated that there was no need to improve current training.

“I believe it [culture training] would be substantially beneficial because a lot of how we build and maintain rapport involves culture.”

SOF Leader, 20th SFG

Figure 10. Culture Training Evaluation



Note. The percentages are based on 1) the number of times a positive/useful culture training comment was made: Overall = 42; SOF leaders = 15; SOF operators = 27, or 2) the number of times a negative/not useful culture training comment was made: Overall = 26; SOF leaders = 10; SOF operators = 16. Some comments contained multiple themes. Therefore, the total number of codes assigned may be greater than the total number of SOF operators who responded. Descriptions of code definitions are included in Appendix E. Frequency tables are included in Appendix F.

SOF operators and leaders negative comments about their (or their operators') culture training said that the training's ineffectiveness was due to instructors or materials. For example, some reported their instructors were not up-to-date with cultural knowledge.

"the instructor was constrained by his own myopic, ethnocentric world view"

SOF Operator, 3rd SFG

"The people used had not been to the target country in more than 10 years or had never even been there at all."

SOF Operator, 7th SFG

Additionally, the material covered was not useful for the mission (e.g., too academic).

"It was interesting, however it was of little use as it was not integrated into any larger program of cultural education."

SOF Operator, USSOCOM HQ

"The trainer did not know his target audience and was too academic in his approach. For example when a speaker tells you "never to yell at an Afghan or make them to lie on the ground" he loses credibility with the audience. Training should be confined to the practical and universal. Local intricacies will reveal themselves when you arrive."

SOF Operator, 7th SFG

"Updated briefings to reflect the changes in the AOR due to American forces, and continuing training on the culture. Current training seems to have stopped being developed since the second or third year of current situation."

SOF Leader, USSOCOM HQ

Lastly, one SOF operator received culture training for a particular area and then did not deploy to that region.

"I receive excellent training on the Middle East, but was then never deployed to the Middle East. I was deployed to Afghanistan (Asia), and Africa; neither of which I received cultural training on"

SOF Operator, Deployed SO unit

Culture Training Descriptions

Some comments discussed culture training without evaluating the current training programs. These comments included detailed descriptions, barriers to the receipt of training, statements of training importance, comments about never receiving training, and others (Figure 11, p. 19). Descriptions of training were the most common type of comment provided by SOF operators and leaders.

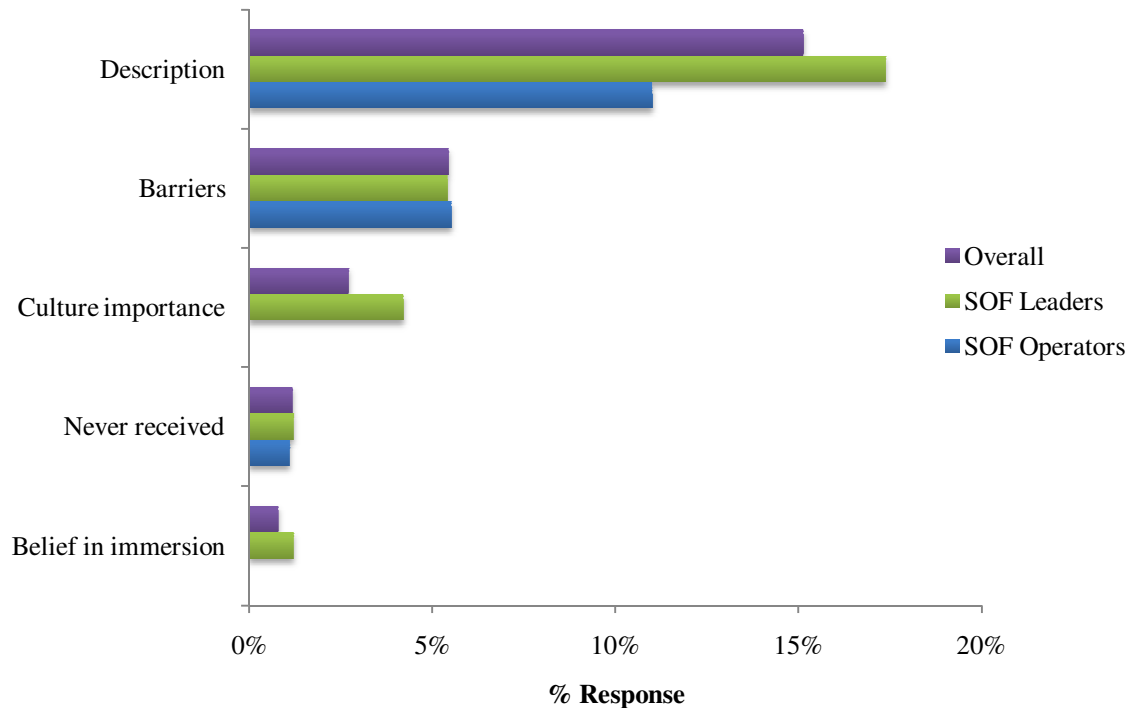
"Most of the cultural training comes during the pipeline. After that, it is learned during independent study as team's develop a country study."

SOF Leader, 95th CA Bde

"We had some limited culture training and awareness training prior to the last deployment, as well as cultural sensitivity added to training and evaluation scenarios."

SOF Operator, 3rd SFG

Figure 11. Discussion of Culture Training



Note. The percentages are based on the number of times discussion about culture training (without evaluation) comment was made: Overall = 65; SOF leaders = 49; SOF operators = 16. Some comments contained multiple themes. Therefore, the total number of codes assigned may be greater than the total number of SOF operators who responded. Descriptions of code definitions are included in Appendix E. Frequency tables are included in Appendix F.

In their comments, SOF operators and leaders identified barriers preventing SOF operators from receiving culture training, including lack of command support for culture training, as other training requirements often took away from culture training time. These other training requirements may be linked to an upcoming deployment and limit the time SOF operators have to learn the deployment region culture.

“The biggest problem is that culture training occurs as an afterthought and gets plugged in (maybe) where there happens to be a free day in the PMT. Because cultural training has not been standardized with standard resources for each possible area of deployment, it is us to each company to seek out, find, and contract their own cultural trainer. Depending on the level of emphasis given this by the leadership, this may or may not happen, or it may happen but not be entirely effective. It could be improved by having emphasis from the top down and by being mandated as a training event for a specific amount of time - in the same way medical trainings and other multiple training tasks are mandated by USASOC.”

SOF Leader, 95th CA Bde

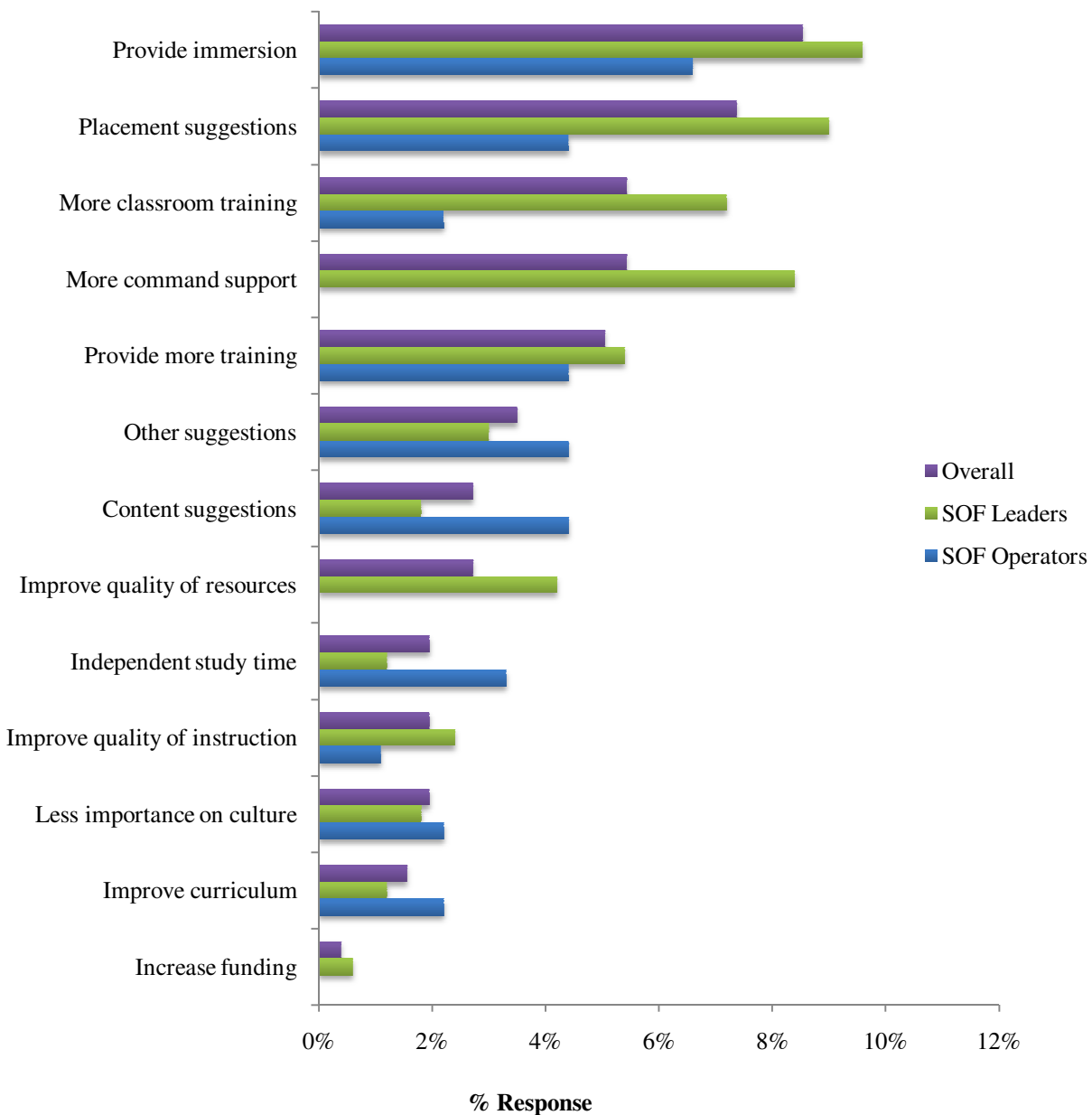
“It is incorporated into language training. Again, no emphasis and it falls to the wayside. People are pulled from the class for other PMT requirements.”

SOF Operator, 1st SFG

Culture Training Suggestions

SOF operators and leaders suggested how to improve culture training. Suggestions ranged from providing more immersion opportunities (9%, $n = 22$) to increasing funding (<1%, $n = 1$; Figure 12, p. 20).

Figure 12. Suggestions for Improving Culture Training



Note. The percentages are based on the number of times a culture training suggestion was made: Overall = 134; SOF leaders = 102; SOF operators = 32. Some comments contained multiple themes. Therefore, the total number of codes assigned may be greater than the total number of SOF operators who responded. Descriptions of code definitions are included in Appendix E. Frequency tables are included in Appendix F.

The most frequent suggestion provided by both SOF operators (7%, $n = 6$) and leaders (10%, $n = 16$) was for SOF operators to receive more immersion training opportunities.

“Immersion training in the target language and culture should be the rule and not the exception. They should separate as well since focusing on one would neglect the other and it is not entirely feasible to focus on both for many languages.”

SOF Operator, 95th CA Bde

“In country working with indig[enous people] is the best cultural training you can get.”

SOF Operator, USSOCOM HQ

“If we send our operators in language training on a immersion training OCONUS we will enhance our Cultural capability.”

SOF Leader, USSOCOM HQ

“All cultural training we receive is either a function of on the job experience during a deployment, peer to peer knowledge, or picked up through self study by the operator. If a LET⁷ program that deployed operators to their target countries for travel and study for a time of no less than one month were implemented it would greatly improve our capabilities.”

SOF Operator, 1st SFG

SOF operators (4%, $n = 4$) and leaders (9%, $n = 15$) suggested that culture training should be incorporated into language training or pre-mission training.

“Cultural training needs to be a funded activity for SOF personnel that is integrated with cultural events at civilian institutions. These events should be focused on countries/cultures that either impact operations or exist where operations will be conducted.”

SOF Leader, 1st SFG

“Should be incorporated into language training and training events.”

SOF Leader, 5th SFG

“Cultural training can be added to the immersion training, and then brought to the unit in a train the trainer aspect.”

SOF Leader, 95th CA Bde

SOF leader suggestions differed from SOF operator suggestion in three areas. First, more leaders (7%, $n = 12$) than operators (2%, $n = 2$) suggested that operators should receive classroom-based culture training.

“Cultural training for Afghanistan has been “in house” and put together by experienced paxs who have deployed before. There should be a formal program through SOCOM where training can be set up on cultural training.”

SOF Leader, TSOC

⁷ LET = Live Environment Training, which is another term used for OCONUS immersion training

“Needs to be longer to adequately cover all the material. A lot of the training consists of handouts that we are expected to read on our own time. Most soldiers don’t have the discipline to study material on their own.”

SOF Operator, 95th CA Bde

Second, SOF leaders (8%, $n = 14$) suggested that command should support/emphasize culture training. No SOF operators made this suggestion.

“Group and Battalion Command emphasis on cultural training is the first step.”

SOF Leader, 4th MISG

“Cultural training is as important as language training and an equal emphasis needs to be put on it.”

SOF Leader, TSOC

Third, SOF leaders (4%, $n = 7$) suggested improving the quality of resources available for SOF operators. Suggestions for improvement included instructor changes and providing web-based resources. No SOF operator provided these suggestions.

“Use current relative specialists to teach. A uniform guy or a civilian who has not live nor visited his country within the past 2 years is not relevant.”

SOF Leader, 95th CA Bde

SECTION IV: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

During focus groups, SOF operators discussed both effective and ineffective culture training experiences. This section covers the main themes covered in the focus groups and provides example comments.⁸

Research Questions

This section addresses the following questions:

- What effective culture training experiences have operators experienced?
- What ineffective culture training experiences have operators experienced?

Main Findings

Focus group participants discussed both effective and ineffective culture training experiences. Most effective experiences involved immersion, which was effective because it: (1) required interpersonal communication with locals; (2) involved learning non-verbal communication; and (3) allowed familiarization with the target country prior to deployment. These findings were similar to experiences described by SOF operators and leaders in the open-ended survey responses (see Section III), as the most common suggestion for improvement to the current culture training was for more immersion training opportunities.

Most ineffective culture training experiences described unstructured culture training that did not include adequate activities to engage students and build cultural awareness. Other reasons related to culture training ineffectiveness included the training not being focused on the region of deployment and the length of training being too short. Issues with the training length were consistent with the comments provided on the survey. Specifically, SOF operators and leaders described a need for longer culture training to allow for full coverage of the needed material.

Detailed Findings

Effective Culture Training Experiences

Focus group participants described effective experiences in culture training, including details about the preferred training delivery method and location (Table 3, p. 24). Effective experiences mostly involved immersion ($n = 11$) training. All immersion experiences discussed included language-based classroom component ($n = 11$) and a component of informal learning ($n = 4$).

“Immersion training, right back at it. Because you’re picking up culture because you’re living with a family, and then you’re getting that upper level learning at the university, but you’re getting the conversational piece when you’re living with that family. And then you’re out in the markets, you’re talking to local people. So you’re picking up culture at the same time.”

SOF Operator, 1st Battalion (Bn) 10th SFG(A)

⁸ See Appendix B: Methodology, the *Participation Report* (Technical Report #2010011003), and the *Methodology Report* (Technical Report #2010011002) for more information about focus group participation and methodology.

“in that country...the more interaction you have and spent every day out walking around, finding people, making friends, shopping, going to the markets, trying to get into a mosque, trying to get someone to convince me I should become a Muslim...and the next thing you know you have picked up on everything, and if you just parrot their mannerisms, they’ll teach you what to do by whether they mean it or not.”

SOF Operator, 1st Bn 10th SFG(A)

Table 3. Focus Group Themes—Effective Training Delivery Method and Location

Training delivery method	Count
Classroom ¹	11
Formal OCONUS immersion	11
Informal (on-the-job) training ²	4
One-on-one tutoring	1
Classroom followed by immersion	1
Other	1
Training location	
Language lab	3
DLI	2
SWCS	1
Other	1

¹All formal OCONUS immersion experiences had a language-based classroom component.

²These informal training experiences took place during immersion.

Reasons for why immersion experiences were effective included engagement in real situations that required interpersonal communication (e.g., conversation) with locals and observation of non-verbal communication (Table 4, p. 25).

Participant: *“I took the Chinese training here and I think absolutely the best part of it was the immersion downtown in the Chinese community; it was like a week long.”*

Moderator: *“At the end of that particular training course, what about that was effective?”*

Participant: *“A lot of getting into the culture and some of the more quote/unquote ‘local,’ the way they speak, a variety of different people with the language, talking about various subjects.”*

SOF Operator, 1st SFG(A)

Furthermore, even those who have not experienced immersion training perceived immersion to be the most effective culture training method ($n = 10$).

Table 4. Focus Group Themes—Reasons for Effective Culture Training

Reason why training was effective	Count
Belief that immersion is effective, but no experience	10
Training was effective due to interactions with others	3
Other comments about effective training experiences	2
Training was effective due to activities	2
Training was effective due to the instructor	1

Several focus group participants received pre-deployment training, most of which was in a classroom setting and involved language and cultural components.

“What it was for us is saying, hey, we’ve got a couple Iraqis here at the command, they’re putting on a quick five-day course; if you guys have some time while you’re here, you’ve got to come to work anyway so you might as well do that. It was just them sitting at a table and maybe 15 guys showed up, I guess, and they just went through a basic, quick rundown as to history of the country, just to get to know the country a little bit and what the tribes were—things that you need to know... Cultural piece, not their economy, but where the warring has been occurring and which tribes and how to recognize this and that, so important stuff that we would need to know, culturally speaking.”

SOF Operator, WARCOM

Some pre-deployment, classroom culture training provided dos and don’ts for the deployment region.

SOF Operator: *“Everybody pretty much, before you go wherever you’re at, they do cultural study on the area, the dos and don’ts, before you go.”*

Moderator: *“So you get some sort of pre-mission culture training?”*

SOF Operator: *“Yes, that stuff is pretty simple and straightforward, before you go into any theater.”*

Moderator: *“So the training that you have received prior to deploying has been sufficient to—?”*

SOF Operator: *“To be able to get by without offending the culture, yes.”*

SOF Operator, 1st SFG(A)

Other types of effective culture experiences discussed in focus groups described the importance of passing on informal, on-the-job culture learning from experienced operators to inexperienced SOF operators.

“I think right now, I kind of think it might be adequate, kind of for the way we’re structured. Because right now the guys who have that cultural knowledge are team sergeants and the experienced guys, and they pass it on. And it’s something that you gain from going to a set area over and over. And you pass it on to the other guys, “hey, they’re going to do this,” they’re like “holy cow.” You get in discussions with your own guys about why they’re doing stuff, especially the younger guys. And then you go to

another AO. That's where it really becomes different. You're really dependent on other guys to kind of pull you through. "

SOF Operator, AFSOC

Ineffective Culture Training Experiences

Focus group discussion about ineffective culture training experiences occurred less frequently than the effective training experiences. The ineffective descriptions most often related to (Table 5, p. 26):

- Training was not specific

"For cultural training, the least effective thing that we were told, we were told to watch the news, like that was our part of our cultural training was to watch the news, see what's happening on the news. But in that respect, the news only tells when it's bad, so we were only getting like—okay, so we're going to get blown up over there, that's basically what the news is telling us."

SOF Operator, 4th MISG

- Training that was not relevant to the deployment/mission

"And in my specific instance we were going to EUCOM, and they were giving us a CENTCOM cultural awareness brief. It was just kind of like, "Why are we even bothering with this?""

SOF Operator, WARCOC

- Training was not engaging

"For me, it has been a resource, finding the right cultural instructors for this kind of audience who doesn't want to sit and listen to academics for two hours; it's got to be an engaging speaker. We had this great guy that was out a few weeks ago, but he wasn't that engaging; he had the right material but do we have someone in the circuit teaching cultural stuff that has been very successful at teaching that kind of stuff? I haven't seen it yet."

SOF Operator, MARSOC

Table 5. Focus Group Themes—Ineffective Experiences with Culture Training

Ineffective experiences with culture training	Count
Different instructors have different teaching styles	2
Did not specify why training was ineffective	2
Training was ineffective due to training activities	2
Length of training is not long enough	1
General other negative comments	1

SECTION V: CONCLUSION

This report informed SOF leaders and those involved with the design and delivery of SOF culture training programs about the current state of cultural awareness and knowledge training in the SOF community. One of the major findings in this study was the conflicting perspectives between SOF operators and leaders regarding the definition of culture training. SOF operators were less likely to indicate receiving training, reported shorter training lengths, and were more likely to reference formal classroom instruction than SOF leaders.

“A basic PowerPoint on social structure done by military academics”

SOF Operator, 1st SFG

“We hired an Afghanistan-Pakistan expert to come to my company and teach for one week.”

SOF Operator, TSOC

In contrast, SOF leaders focused on longer, informal methods of culture training.

“All cultural training we receive is either a function of on the job experience during a deployment, peer to peer knowledge, or picked up through self study by the operator.”

SOF Leader, 1st SFG

Differences in culture training participation perceptions between SOF operators and leaders were most pronounced in USASOC, with Army SOF operators indicating 27% participation, while Army SOF leaders indicated 82%. Other SOF components, despite low participation in the survey, indicated less extreme differences in the receipt of culture training between SOF operators and leaders (e.g., 50% of WARCOM operators surveyed indicated participation, compared to 36% of surveyed WARCOM leaders).

The differing perspectives between SOF operators and leaders in regards to culture training leads to the questions: *What is the difference between formal and informal training, and which type is sufficient for SOF operator culture training needs?* Research demonstrates that both formal and informal training play unique roles in building cultural awareness and knowledge. Informal learning (e.g., on-the-job) is most effective when it takes place in combination with formal training (e.g., classroom training) and is more effective when leadership supports it (Dale & Bell, 1999). Activities that facilitate informal learning include demonstration, shadowing, practice, and constructive feedback. For building cultural skills, the most effective training may be a hybrid of formal and informal learning. An example of this hybrid is immersion training, which often combines classroom learning with experiential, informal learning. Experiential learning may work best for building cultural awareness, but SOF operators need to know what types of cultural information to look for; therefore, the classroom component fills that gap. To improve cultural awareness and knowledge training in the SOF community, best practices for designing and delivering training should be considered. Research describes many options for designing and delivering culture training formally and informally. Options for culture training design and delivery include (Littrell & Salas, 2005):

- Didactic training—Also known as information-giving training, this is one of the most common cross-cultural training strategies. This training informs individuals about the working and living conditions in the target region, and also covers cultural differences. Examples of didactic training include briefings, formal education activities, and culture assimilators (Brewster, 1995).
- Cultural awareness training—This training focuses on the individual’s own values and culture and then compares them with the target region’s values and culture. This allows the individual to identify and appreciate the differences and apply this knowledge to improve interactions with natives.
- Interaction training—This training is on-the-job, typically with an individual who already has cultural awareness and knowledge in the job context. In the SOF community, this may be a deployed SOF operator mentoring a newly deployed operator who will be taking his or her place.
- Experiential training—This training is described as “learn by doing.” In this training, the individual participates in activities that are likely to be experienced in the target region. This training focuses on development of skills necessary to function in the work context and to build rapport with natives. Examples of experiential learning include role-plays, intercultural workshops, and simulations (Kealey & Protheroe, 1996; Morris & Robie, 2001), all of which require instructional support and guidance. Another example of this type of training is immersion training. For more information about immersion opportunities in the SOF community, please refer to *Immersion Training* (Technical Report #2010011020).
- Language training—Training that at least teaches individuals to exchange common courtesies in the target language will increase intercultural adjustment. Therefore, incorporating cultural awareness and knowledge training into language training is an efficient and effective option.

Although most SOF operators and leaders agreed that the culture training received was *moderately effective* to *effective*, very few reported training was *very effective*. As such, the most common survey suggestion provided by SOF operators and leaders suggested that training could be improved by providing more immersion training and integrating it into other training opportunities. This suggestion was also common among SOF operators in focus groups. The suggestion for more immersion opportunities supports the best practice of integrating formal and informal training.

“Spend the money, build a place where we can do full immersion training, and send everyone that needs to go.”

SOF Operator, 4th MISG

“Immersion training in the target language and culture should be the rule and not the exception. They should separate as well since focusing on one would neglect the other and it is not entirely feasible to focus on both for many languages.”

SOF Operator, 95th CA Bde

“All cultural training we receive is either a function of on the job experience during a deployment, peer to peer knowledge, or picked up through self study by the operator. If a LET⁹ program that deployed operators to their target countries for travel and study for a

⁹ LET = Live Environment Training, which is another term used for OCONUS immersion training

time of no less than one month were implemented it would greatly improve our capabilities.”

SOF Operator, 1st SFG

Another suggestion provided by both survey and focus group participants is to increase the length of culture training. Longer training events allow SOF operators more opportunity to learn and digest the cultural information. Support for this suggestion was found in survey responses regarding the perceptions of culture training effectiveness. As culture training length increases, the perception of culture training effectiveness also increases.

Also, to be effective, the training content must be considered. Survey comments suggested that some culture training was outdated or did not provide information that SOF operators need to meet their culture-related mission requirements. Additionally, some survey comments identified barriers that inhibit operators from receiving culture training. The most frequently discussed barrier was lack of time to commit to culture training, sometimes due to command's lack of support for culture training in relation to other training requirements.

“No emphasis and it falls to the wayside. People are pulled from the class for other PMT requirements.”

SOF Leader, 1st SFG

Best practices for culture training delivery include providing multiple delivery strategies within one training program (Littrell & Salas, 2005); for example, incorporating strategies that are formal and informal learning opportunities. Additionally, align the delivery with the training's goals. For example, if the goal of training is to prepare SOF operators for formal meetings and communications, then the cultural awareness and knowledge necessary to be successful in those situations should be the focus of training. Lastly, it is best practice to provide training prior to deployment, immediately after deployment, or both.

Given the comments from the SOF community about improving culture training and research stating the best practices for designing and delivering culture training, the effectiveness of the training for SOF operators in the community to be “culturally attuned” can likely be improved. Keeping in mind practical and other logistical constraints, not all these suggestions may be appropriate or feasible for the entire SOF community. More research focused on specific culture training events in the SOF community is needed for more definitive recommendations. The findings and suggestions from SOF operators and leaders from this report along with findings from two other *Tier I* reports, *Training Emphasis: Language and Culture* and *Inside/Outside AOR Use of Cultural Knowledge*, are integrated into a *Tier II* report, *Culture Training Guidance*. The *Tier II* report provides a more comprehensive view of suggestions for culture training improvement. Therefore, any suggestions provided in this report are contingent on further examination of the information presented in the *Training Emphasis: Language and Culture* and *Inside/Outside AOR Use of Cultural Knowledge* reports.

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ABOUT SWA CONSULTING INC.

SWA Consulting Inc. (formerly Surface, Ward, and Associates) provides analytics and evidence-based solutions for clients using the principles and methods of industrial/organizational (I/O) psychology. Since 1997, SWA has advised and assisted corporate, non-profit and governmental clients on:

- Training and development
- Performance measurement and management
- Organizational effectiveness
- Test development and validation
- Program/training evaluation
- Work/job analysis
- Needs assessment
- Selection system design
- Study and analysis related to human capital issues
- Metric development and data collection
- Advanced data analysis

One specific practice area is analytics, research, and consulting on foreign language and culture in work contexts. In this area, SWA has conducted numerous projects, including language assessment validation and psychometric research; evaluations of language training, training tools, and job aids; language and culture focused needs assessments and job analysis; and advanced analysis of language research data.

Based in Raleigh, NC, and led by Drs. Eric A. Surface and Stephen J. Ward, SWA now employs close to twenty I/O professionals at the masters and PhD levels. SWA professionals are committed to providing clients the best data and analysis with which to make solid data-driven decisions. Taking a scientist-practitioner perspective, SWA professionals conduct model-based, evidence-driven research and consulting to provide the best answers and solutions to enhance our clients' mission and business objectives. SWA has competencies in measurement, data collection, analytics, data modeling, systematic reviews, validation, and evaluation.

For more information about SWA, our projects, and our capabilities, please visit our website (www.swa-consulting.com) or contact Dr. Eric A. Surface (esurface@swa-consulting.com) or Dr. Stephen J. Ward (sward@swa-consulting.com).

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APPENDIX A: ABOUT THE LCNA PROJECT

In 2003-2004, the Special Operations Forces Language Office (SOFLO) sponsored the *SOF Language Transformation Strategy Needs Assessment Project* to inform the development of a language transformation strategy in response to a GAO report (2003). This *SOF Language Transformation Strategy Needs Assessment Project* collected current-state information about language usage, proficiency, training, and policy issues (e.g., Foreign Language Proficiency Pay, FLPP) from SOF personnel, SOF unit leaders, and other personnel involved in SOF language. The project used multiple data collection methods and provided the SOFLO with valid data to develop a comprehensive language transformation strategy and advocate for the SOF perspective on language issues within the DoD community.

In a continuing effort to update knowledge of language and culture needs while informing strategic plan development, the SOFLO commissioned the *2009 SOF Language and Culture Needs Assessment Project* (LCNA) to reassess the language and culture landscape across the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) and develop a strategy for the next five years. Data were collected between March and November, 2009 from personnel in the SOF community, including SOF operators and leaders. Twenty-three focus groups were conducted between March and June, 2009. A comprehensive, web-based survey for SOF operators and leaders was launched on 26 October and closed on 24 November, 2009.

This project's findings will be disseminated through reports and briefings (see Appendix A, Figure 1). Two foundational reports document the methodology and participants associated with this project. The remaining reports are organized in three tiers. Twenty-five *Tier I* reports focus on specific, limited issues (e.g., *Inside AOR Use of Language*). *Tier II* reports integrate and present the most important findings across related *Tier I* reports (e.g., *Use of Language and Culture on Deployment*) while including additional data and analysis on the topic. Most, but not all, *Tier I* reports will roll into *Tier II* reports. One *Tier III* report presents the most important findings, implications, and recommendations across all topics explored in this project. The remaining *Tier III* reports present findings for specific SOF organizations [e.g., Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC), Special Forces (SF) Command]. All *Tier III* reports are associated with a briefing. Report topics are determined by the SOFLO and subject to change.

In June, 2009, the GAO reported that the Department of Defense is making progress toward transforming language and regional proficiency capabilities but still does not have a strategic plan in place to continue development that includes actionable goals and objectives. The findings from this study can be used by the SOFLO and leaders at USSOCOM to continue strategic planning and development in this area.

This project design, logistics, data collection, initial analysis and first eight reports of this project were conducted by SWA Consulting Inc. (SWA) under a subcontract with SRC (SR20080668 (K142); Prime # N65236-08-D-6805). The additional reports are funded under a separate contracting vehicle with Gemini Industries Inc. [GEM02-ALMBOS-0018 (10210SWA-1); Prime # USZA22-02-D-0015]. For questions or more information about the SOFLO and this project, please contact Mr. Jack Donnelly (john.donnelly@socom.mil). For specific questions related to data collection or reports associated with this project, please contact Dr. Eric A. Surface (esurface@swa-consulting.com) or Dr. Reanna Poncheri Harman (rpcharman@swa-consulting.com) with SWA Consulting Inc.

Appendix A, Figure 1. Report Overview



Note: Foundation reports are referenced by every other report. Colors represent Tier I reports that roll (integrate) into an associated Tier II report. Reports in black are final reports on the topic but may be cited by other reports. Tier II reports roll into the Tier III reports. All Tier III reports include an associated briefing.

APPENDIX B: METHODOLOGY

Participants

Focus Group Participants

Twenty-three focus groups were conducted with 126 SOF personnel across the SOF community. Focus groups were conducted with Air Force Special Operations (AFSOC), Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command (MARSOC), Naval Special Warfare Command (NAVSPECWARCOM or WARCOM), and United States Army Special Operations Command (USASOC) (see *Participation Report*, Technical Report #2010011003 for participant details). Discussion about effective and ineffective culture training experiences from the focus groups are presented in Section IV (see *Methodology Report*, Technical Report #2010011002 for the focus group interview guide).

Survey Participants

Survey respondents received the SOF operator version of the culture training items if they indicated one of the following SOF community roles:

- SOF Operator (e.g., SEAL team member, SF team member, etc.)
- SOF Operator assigned to other duty (e.g., recruiting)
- Currently in the training pipeline
- Military Intelligence (MI) Linguist or 09L assigned or attached to a SOF unit

Survey respondents received the SOF leader version of the culture training items if they indicated one of the following SOF community roles:

- SOF Unit Commander
- Command Language Program Manager (CLPM)
- Language office personnel

The focus of this report is on SOF operator and leader perspectives, therefore, MI Linguist/09L, CLPM, and language office personnel perspectives are not included in this report. For further details on participation and attrition rates, please refer to the *Participation Report* (Technical Report #2010011003).

Measures

SOF operator version

Survey respondents taking the SOF operator version of the survey received the following branching item regarding culture training:

- Have you ever participated in culture training (related to a deployment region) paid for and/or sponsored by the military or government?

Those who replied “No” were branched to the next survey section/topic. Respondents who replied “Yes” to this item received other items related to culture training. Respondents were prompted to think about the items in regards to their most recent culture training experience. The follow-up items included:

- Where did you participate in your most recent culture training?
- How long was your most recent culture training?
- How effective was the most recent culture training you received?
- Please provide any other comments you have on the most recent culture training you received and/or how it could be improved in the future.

SOF leader version

Survey respondents taking the SOF leader version of the survey received the following branching item regarding culture training:

- Do operators in your unit receive culture training (related to a deployment region)? (If yes, are you in a position to comment on this?)

Respondents who indicated “Yes, and I am in a position to comment on my unit’s culture training” received other items related to culture training:

- On average, how long is the culture training your operators receive?
- How effective is the culture training your operators receive?
- Please provide any comments you have on culture training and/or how it can be improved in the future.

Respondents who indicated “No, operators in my unit do not receive culture training” received one follow-up item related to culture training:

- How effective would it be for your operators to receive culture training?

Respondents who indicated “Yes, but I am not in a position to comment on my unit’s culture training” or “I don’t know/Not applicable” were branched to the next survey section.

It should be noted that the item prompts were slightly different for the SOF operator and leader survey versions. SOF operators were asked if they ever received culture training paid for/sponsored by the military or government. SOF leaders were asked if operators in their unit received training (with no mention of it being paid for/sponsored by the military or government). This wording difference may have led to the differing responses between SOF operators and leaders.

Analyses

All closed-ended items were analyzed using a combination of descriptive and inferential statistics. To compare responses across groups of participants, inferential statistics (e.g., t-tests, analysis of variance) were used to determine if any observed differences are likely to exist in the broader population of interest. Among the groups compared included:

- SOF operators and leaders
- SOF components (i.e., AFSOC, MARSOC, WARCOC, USASOC)
- USASOC organizations (e.g., 95th CA Bde, 4th MISG, 1st SFG)

Focus group commentary and open-ended survey items were analyzed separately by different sets of coders. However, the process implemented was similar for analyzing both sets of data. To analyze the both types of data, two raters created a content code (i.e., theme) list based on available responses (see *Methodology Report*, Technical Report #2010011002 for details on qualitative coding). A primary rater then coded each response and a secondary rater coded 30% of the responses. Raters determined the consistency of codes applied between them and discussed any disagreements to consensus. The frequency of occurrence for each theme is presented in this report. Analysis of the focus group data followed the same protocol, except 100% of the responses were coded by two raters.

For further details on these methods, please refer to the *Methodology Report* (Technical Report #2010011002).

APPENDIX C: SOF OPERATOR RESPONSES

Appendix C, Table 1. SOF Operator Culture Training Length by Component

Group	n	Mean	1 day or less	2-3 days	4-5 days	1 week	More than 1 week
All SOF Operators	320	2.82	27%	23%	11%	18%	21%
AFSOC	10	3.40	20%	10%	10%	30%	30%
MARSOC	7	3.14	14%	29%	14%	14%	29%
WARCOM	4	2.25	25%	25%	50%	0%	0%
USASOC	214	2.76	29%	23%	10%	20%	18%

Note. "All SOF Operators" group includes all responses from SOF operators and SOF operators assigned to other duty. Responses were made on the following scale: 1 = 1 day or less, 2 = 2-3 days, 3 = 4-5 days, 4 = 1 week, 5 = more than 1 week. Means were not statistically compared due to varying sample sizes across SOF components.

Appendix C, Table 2. SOF Operator Culture Training Length by USASOC Organization

Group	n	Mean	1 day or less	2-3 days	4-5 days	1 week	More than 1 week
All USASOC	214	2.76	29%	23%	10%	20%	18%
4th MSG	32	3.37 ^a	13%	19%	16%	25%	28%
95th CA Bdg	52	2.96 ^{ab}	21%	19%	23%	15%	21%
1st SFG	19	2.47 ^{ab}	32%	26%	16%	16%	11%
3rd SFG	22	2.55 ^{ab}	32%	32%	5%	14%	18%
5th SFG	30	2.93 ^{ab}	30%	17%	3%	30%	20%
7th SFG	28	2.07 ^b	46%	32%	0%	11%	11%
10th SFG	8	2.25 ^{ab}	50%	13%	0%	38%	0%
19th SFG	1	1.00	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
20th SFG	3	1.67	33%	67%	0%	0%	0%



















































Note. Only SOF operators were included in this table. USASOC organizations sharing the same letter (e.g., a or b) did not report significantly different training lengths. USASOC organizations NOT sharing the same letter did report significantly different training lengths. Please refer to the mean to determine which group provided longer training lengths. 19th and 20th SFG were not statistically compared to other USASOC organizations due to small sample sizes. Responses were made on the following scale: 1 = 1 day or less, 2 = 2-3 days, 3 = 4-5 days, 4 = 1 week, 5 = More than 1 week.

Appendix C, Table 3. SOF Operator Training Effectiveness by Component

Group	n	Mean	Not effective	Slightly effective	Moderately effective	Effective	Very Effective
All SOF Operators	319	3.19	8%	22%	26%	32%	12%
AFSOC	10	3.40	0%	30%	10%	50%	10%
MARSOC	7	3.14	14%	29%	14%	14%	29%
WARCOM	4	4.00	0%	0%	25%	50%	25%
USASOC	214	3.15	8%	23%	27%	30%	12%

Note. "All SOF Operators" group includes all responses from SOF operators and SOF operators assigned to other duty. Responses were made on the following scale: 1 = Not effective, 2 = Slightly effective, 3 = Moderately effective, 4 = Effective, 5 = Very effective. Means were not statistically compared due to varying sample sizes across SOF components.

Appendix C, Table 4. SOF Operator Training Effectiveness by USASOC Organization

Group	n	Mean	Not effective	Slightly effective	Moderately effective	Effective	Very Effective
All USASOC	214	3.15	8% 	23% 	27% 	30% 	12% 
4th MISG	32	2.97 ^{ab}	3% 	34% 	34% 	19% 	9% 
95th CA Bde	52	3.46 ^a	6% 	17% 	21% 	37% 	19% 
1st SFG	18	2.67 ^{ab}	22% 	17% 	33% 	28% 	0% 
3rd SFG	22	3.32 ^{ab}	14% 	14% 	23% 	27% 	23% 
5th SFG	30	3.10 ^{ab}	3% 	27% 	33% 	30% 	7% 
7th SFG	28	2.61 ^b	18% 	36% 	18% 	25% 	4% 
10th SFG	9	3.11 ^{ab}	0% 	33% 	22% 	44% 	0% 
19th SFG	1	4.00	0% 	0% 	0% 	100% 	0% 
20th SFG	3	3.33	0% 	33% 	0% 	67% 	0% 

Note. Only SOF operators were included in this table. USASOC organizations sharing the same letter (e.g., a or b) did not report significantly different effectiveness ratings. USASOC organizations NOT sharing the same letter did report significantly different effectiveness ratings. Please refer to the mean to determine which group provided higher effectiveness ratings. 19th and 20th SFG were not statistically compared to other USASOC organizations due to small sample sizes. Responses were made on the following scale: 1 = *Not effective*, 2 = *Slightly effective*, 3 = *Moderately effective*, 4 = *Effective*, 5 = *Very effective*.

APPENDIX D: SOF LEADER RESPONSES

Appendix D, Table 1. SOF Leader Culture Training Length by Component

Group	n	Mean	1 day or less	2-3 days	4-5 days	1 week	More than 1 week
All SOF Leaders	233	3.06	18%	31%	10%	8%	33%
AFSOC	2	2.00	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%
MARSOC	4	3.50	0%	25%	25%	25%	25%
WARCOM	1	1.00	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
USASOC	166	3.13	17%	30%	11%	10%	33%

Note. "All SOF Leaders" group includes all responses from SOF commanders and leaders. Responses were made on the following scale: 1 = 1 day or less, 2 = 2-3 days, 3 = 4-5 days, 4 = 1 week, 5 = more than 1 week. Means were not statistically compared due to varying sample sizes across SOF components.

Appendix D, Table 2. SOF Leader Culture Training Length by USASOC Organization

Group	n	Mean	1 day or less	2-3 days	4-5 days	1 week	More than 1 week
All USASOC	166	3.13	17%	30%	11%	10%	33%
4th MISG	44	3.73	5%	27%	9%	9%	50%
95th CA Bde	20	3.25	15%	15%	20%	30%	20%
1st SFG	14	2.79	0%	57%	21%	8%	14%
3rd SFG	20	2.65	35%	25%	5%	10%	25%
5th SFG	34	2.79	26%	29%	9%	9%	26%
7th SFG	8	2.75	13%	50%	13%	0%	25%
10th SFG	7	2.29	29%	43%	14%	0%	14%
19th SFG	2	5.00	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
20th SFG	2	2.00	50%	0%	50%	0%	0%

Note. Only USASOC leaders were included in this table. There were no significant differences in training length responses across USASOC organizations. Responses were made on the following scale: 1 = 1 day or less, 2 = 2-3 days, 3 = 4-5 days, 4 = 1 week, 5 = More than 1 week.

Appendix D, Table 3. SOF Leader Culture Training Effectiveness by Component

Group	n	Mean	Not effective	Slightly effective	Moderately effective	Effective	Very effective
All SOF Leaders	233	3.22	5%	21%	32%	34%	9%
AFSOC	2	2.50	0%	50%	50%	0%	0%
MARSOC	4	3.50	0%	0%	50%	50%	0%
WARCOM	1	1.00	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
USASOC	166	3.28	5%	19%	30%	35%	11%

Note. "All SOF Leaders" group includes all responses from SOF commanders and leaders. Responses were made on the following scale: 1 = Not effective, 2 = Slightly effective, 3 = Moderately effective, 4 = Effective, 5 = Very effective. Means were not statistically compared due to varying sample size across SOF components.

Appendix D, Table 4. SOF Leader Culture Training Effectiveness by USASOC Organization

Group	n	Mean	Not effective	Slightly effective	Moderately effective	Effective	Very effective
All USASOC	166	3.28	5%	19%	30%	35%	11%
4th MISG	44	3.36	2%	14%	36%	41%	7%
95th CA Bde	20	2.85	5%	35%	35%	20%	5%
1st SFG	14	3.29	0%	14%	50%	29%	7%
3rd SFG	20	3.00	15%	15%	30%	35%	5%
5th SFG	35	3.60	3%	17%	17%	43%	20%
7th SFG	7	3.14	0%	43%	14%	29%	14%
10th SFG	7	2.86	0%	29%	57%	14%	0%
19th SFG	2	4.50	0%	0%	0%	50%	50%
20th SFG	2	2.50	50%	0%	0%	50%	0%

Note. Only USASOC leaders were included in this table. There were no significant differences in effectiveness ratings across USASOC organizations. Responses were made on the following scale: 1 = Not effective, 2 = Slightly effective, 3 = Moderately effective, 4 = Effective, 5 = Very effective.

Appendix D, Table 5. SOF Leader Potential Effectiveness of Culture Training by Component

Group	n	Mean	Not effective	Slightly effective	Moderately effective	Effective	Very effective
All SOF Leaders	98	3.47	6%	18%	22%	29%	24%
AFSOC	1	3.00	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%
WARCOM	5	3.20	0%	40%	20%	20%	20%
USASOC	50	3.46	10%	18%	18%	24%	30%

Note. "All SOF Leaders" group includes all responses from SOF commanders and leaders. No MARSOC leaders responded to this item.

Responses were made on the following scale: 1 = *Not effective*, 2 = *Slightly effective*, 3 = *Moderately effective*, 4 = *Effective*, 5 = *Very effective*. Means were not statistically compared due to varying sample size across SOF components.

Appendix D, Table 6. SOF Leader Potential Effectiveness of Culture Training by USASOC Organization

Group	n	Mean	Not effective	Slightly effective	Moderately effective	Effective	Very effective
All USASOC	50	3.46	10%	18%	18%	24%	30%
4th MSG	8	4.13	0%	0%	12%	12%	63%
95th CA Bde	4	3.50	0%	0%	50%	50%	0%
1st SFG	5	3.00	20%	20%	0%	60%	0%
3rd SFG	7	3.00	14%	29%	14%	28%	14%
5th SFG	3	2.67	33%	33%	0%	0%	33%
7th SFG	6	3.17	17%	17%	33%	0%	33%
10th SFG	5	3.40	0%	20%	40%	20%	20%
19th SFG	1	4.00	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%
20th SFG	2	1.41	0%	0%	50%	0%	50%

Note. Only USASOC leaders were included in this table. There were no significant differences in effectiveness ratings across USASOC organizations. Responses were made on the following scale: 1 = *Not effective*, 2 = *Slightly effective*, 3 = *Moderately effective*, 4 = *Effective*, 5 = *Very effective*.

APPENDIX E: COMMENT CODE DEFINITIONS

SOF operators were given the opportunity to provide comments in response to the following prompt:

- *Where did you participate in your most recent culture training?*

SOF operators and leaders were given the opportunity to provide comments in response to the following prompt:

- *Please provide any other comments you have on [the most recent]¹⁰ culture training [you received] and/or how it could be improved in the future.*

All comments were content analyzed and common themes extracted. The resulting themes are provided below, with a definition of each theme and verbatim exemplar comments that illustrate the theme. For more information about this study's content analysis process, please refer to the *LCNA Methodology Report* (Technical Report #2010011002).

Note: Exemplar comments are presented verbatim and are uncorrected for spelling and other mistakes.

Where did you participate in your most recent culture training?

- Military location or formal training (e.g., DLI)
 - Definition: This applies to culture training locations that are on military bases or at formal training facilities within the continental United States.
 - "USAJFKSWCS"
 - "Hurlburt Field"
 - "Ft. Bragg"
 - "Ft. Hood"
- CONUS location
 - Definition: This applies to culture training locations that are inside the continental United States (CONUS).
 - "Dearborn, Michigan"
 - "Brighton Beach, New York"
- OCONUS location
 - Definition: This applies to culture training locations that are outside the continental United States (OCONUS).
 - "Germany"
 - "Philippines"
 - "Korea"
 - "Senegal"
 - "Afghanistan"
 - "Iraq"
- Other location/ Can't remember
 - Definition: This applies to culture training locations that are not covered in the above codes, or respondents who could not remember where they received their culture training.

¹⁰ Words in brackets reflect item wording on operator version of the survey.

Please provide any other comments you have on [the most recent] culture training [you received] and/or how it could be improved in the future.

Type of training received

- Immersion
- Classroom
- Informal culture training (e.g., learn on deployment)

Discussion of culture training

- Belief that immersion is the best type of culture training (may include individuals who have experienced immersion)
 - Definition: This applies to comments regarding immersion being the most effective culture training method.
 - *“Nothing beats immersion!”*
- Never received culture training
 - Definition: This applies to comments that indicate the respondent never received culture training.
 - *“No real training”*
 - *“Have never had it.”*
- Barriers to receipt of culture training
 - Definition: This applies to comments that identified barriers to receiving culture training, *not* including lack of command support (see code below).
 - *“Too many distractions.”*
 - *“The training set up for pre deployment was interrupted due to requirements set forth by group.”*
- Lack of command support for culture training
 - Definition: This code applies to comments that identify lack of command support as a barrier to receiving culture training.
 - *“The biggest problem is that culture training occurs as an afterthought and gets plugged in (maybe) where there happens to be a free day in the PMT. Because cultural training has not been standardized with standard resources for each possible area of deployment, it is up to each company to seek out, find, and contract their own cultural trainer. Depending on the level of emphasis given this by the leadership, this may or may not happen, or it may happen but but not be entirely effective.”*
- General statement of culture training importance
 - Definition: This applies to comments that describe a culture training experience but do not provide evaluation (e.g., negative or positive comments) about the experience.
 - *“There is just as much need for culture training as there is for language...more errors can be made by not understanding the culture than in not understanding the language.”*
 - *“It is easier to learn a little culture than it is to learn the language and this can go a long way in a pinch”*

Evaluation of training received

- Culture training was too basic (e.g., do's and don'ts)
 - Definition: This applies to comments that describe the culture training received as too broad (e.g., it only covered the do's and don'ts of the culture).
 - *"Was not very inclusive. Only covered the obvious items of interest at the time."*
 - *"The basics were provided; was a good refresher but ultimately not as useful for those who already had background in the culture."*
- Culture training was not useful for mission
 - Definition: This applies to comments that said the culture training received was not useful for the mission or did not prepare them for the mission.
 - *"Since we have little contact with individuals of differing culture, culture training is not very useful. I've had other jobs in the past (namely PSYOPS) where culture training is very useful, but this is not one of them."*
- Culture training was useful for mission
 - Definition: This applies to comments that said the culture training received was useful for the mission or did prepare them for the mission.
 - *"The cultural awareness experience (not really training) that I received in Malaysia has paid direct dividends to the US government time and again. Most recently (and probably most importantly) I was able to defuse an international incident when a Malaysian officer became disgruntled and upset because he misinterpreted the attitudes of other American officers that were not culturally aware. Without a deep understanding of how to appeal to his nationality, race, religion, and perception, I would not have been able to help him understand the situation better. This kind of understanding is invaluable but can only be gained through immersion."*
- Description of what was taught during culture training (no evaluation of its effectiveness)
 - Definition: This applies to comments that describe the culture training received but do not provide evaluation (e.g., negative or positive comments) about the experience.
 - *"It was short and enough for you not to offend the local culture (outside AOR)"*
 - *"informed us of major cultural do's and don'ts between arabs and westerners"*
- General negative comment about culture training experience (e.g., received cultural training for assigned AOR, then deployed outside AOR)
 - Definition: This applies to comments that describe a negative experience in culture training.
 - *"A 3-4 hour powerpoint presentation is NOT cultural training. There is no way to train someone effectively on cultural awareness if that person or group does not leave their comfort zone and actually see or experience the culture they are trying to learn about. It is not only ridiculous, but pedantic, to think that giving our Soldiers a powerpoint presentation effectively trains them on even the basics of another culture, regardless of that culture."*
 - *"not very effective cause each village/tribe has its own unique customs"*
- General positive comment about culture training experience or no need for improvement (e.g., training was sufficient)

- Definition: This applies to comments that describe a positive experience in culture training or comments that the current culture training does not need improvement because it is sufficient.
 - *“Good training, Great speakers.”*
 - *“never having been deployed, this training was effective at painting a picture of what to expect and how do deal with many situaions.”*
 - *“It was good to get information on current changes due to political changes since my last visit.”*
 - *“It was very good I learned a great deal”*

Suggestions for culture training

- Provide more culture training opportunities
 - Definition: This applies to comments that suggest providing more culture training opportunities to SOF operators, but do not specify in what form this culture training should take place.
 - *“More is better”*
 - *“MORE TRAINING”*
- Provide more opportunity for immersion culture training
 - Definition: This applies to comments that suggest providing more immersion opportunities to SOF operators.
 - *“In country working with indig is the best cultural training you can get.”*
 - *“Immersion would also help cultural awareness.”*
 - *“If we send our operators in language training on a immersion training OCONUS we will enhance our Cultural capability.”*
- Provide more opportunity for classroom culture training (includes all formal culture training)
 - Definition: This applies to comments that suggest providing more opportunity for SOF operators to receive classroom-based culture training.
 - *“If Soldiers are away from their AOR, a well developed yearly cultural awareness briefing will satisfy their needs before deploying.”*
 - *“There should be a formal program through SOCOM where training can be set up on cultural training.”*
- Provide more independent study time for culture training
 - Definition: This applies to comments that suggest providing more independent study time for SOF operators to study culture.
 - *“Encourage mil personnel to do pre-reading, ahead of time.”*
- Placement of culture training (e.g., pre-mission)
 - Definition: This applies to comments that discuss where culture training should be placed in the training pipeline or career progression.
 - *“An initial culture training given during the training pipeline makes sustainment training more effective prior to deployment.”*
 - *“Make it a part of immersion.”*
 - *“in conjunction with MITT deployment, interspersed and sometimes imbedded with other training”*

- More command support/emphasis of culture training (e.g., make culture training mandatory)
 - Definition: This applies to comments that suggest that more command support or command emphasis of culture training, such as making culture training a mandatory event.
 - *“Group and Battalion Command emphasis on cultural training is the first step.”*
 - *“Again...force this into to the Unit's training plan.”*
- Suggestions about what culture training should cover (e.g., topics, regions)
 - Definition: This applies to comments that suggest certain topics or cultural information that should be covered in culture training.
 - *“More training and more detail on tribal/religious/governmental relationship in respective AOs”*
 - *“Cultural training needs to be better directed to the specific target group as opposed to a general region.”*
- Improve quality of resources
 - Definition: This applies to comments that suggest an improvement of culture training resources.
 - *“Create CDs/ DVDs for personnel to review knowledge to maintain culture awareness/ sensitivity.”*
 - *“Provide access to DKO cultural / language skills (although NAVSOF can gain DKO accounts, language (rosettastone) is currently only avail to Army. / / Provide and promote attendance for cultural training webcasts (virtual and in person)”*
- Increase funding
 - Definition: This applies to comments that suggest an increase in funding to support culture training.
 - *“AFSOC either fund TDY costs to send all deploying members to regional acculturatoin courses at JSOU, or provide funding for MTT's from JSOU to deploying units (probably better for cost-effectiveness).”*
- Improve quality of instruction (e.g., native speakers, cultural experts)
 - Definition: This applies to comments that suggest an improvement in the quality of culture training instruction, such as bringing in native speakers or cultural experts.
 - *“Bring in people who are from the target country.”*
 - *“More native speaking trainers”*
 - *“Use current relative specialists to teach. A uniform guy or a civilian who has not live nor visited his country within the past 2 years is not relevant.”*
- Improve activities/curriculum (e.g., role plays)
 - Definition: This applies to comments that suggest an improvement in culture training activities and curricula, such as conducting role plays.
 - *“We can improve it by having vignettes and lessons prepared by either those whom have recently deployed there or have a high level of expertise through other means (self-study, native, etc.).”*
 - *“Maybe involve local community groups. Having guys go to an Afghani cultural event, with a formal dinner, exposure to language, culture, dance, arts etc.’*

- Place less importance on culture training (e.g., language is more important than culture)
 - Definition: This applies to comments that suggest less emphasis be placed on culture training in relation to language training.
 - *“I’ve been deployed enough and focused towards my target area long enough, that this type of training is not very important. I question the focus on this type of training, as it is not very important for 90% of missions I’ve been a part of.”*
 - *“More than adequate the issue is seldom if ever that of one of our people not understanding the culture; it is too often a problem of them NOT understanding the language.”*
 - *“I don’t believe the culture training is the most important aspect of training. It is the language skill that is important. If the person is a respectable person then there will be no issues of him working in other cultures in South America.”*
- Other suggestions about culture training
 - Definition: This applies to comments that suggested an area of improvement for culture training that is not covered in the other codes.
 - *“Conduct training next at and offsite which will help the Soldier to focus on learning about the culture.”*
 - *“Multiple deployments to the same AO is the best way to achieve this.”*

APPENDIX F: OPEN-ENDED COMMENT FREQUENCY TABLES*Appendix F, Table 1. Training type themes*

Theme	Overall	SOF Operators	SOF Leaders
<i>Type of training</i>			
Informal culture training (e.g., learn on deployment)	29	5	24
Classroom	23	17	6
Immersion	5	1	4

Note. Some comments discussed more than one theme. Therefore, the number of themes may not equal the number of comments.

Appendix F, Table 2. Evaluation and discussion frequency themes

Theme	Overall	SOF Operators	SOF Leaders
<i>Evaluation of culture training</i>			
General positive comment about culture training experience/No need for improvement or training was sufficient	40	26	14
General negative comment about culture training experience	22	13	9
Culture training was too broad	3	3	0
Culture training was useful for mission	2	1	1
Culture training was not useful for mission	1	0	1
<i>Discussion of culture training</i>			
Description of what was taught during culture training (no evaluation of its effectiveness)	39	10	29
Barriers to receipt of culture training	11	4	7
General statement of culture training importance	7	0	7
Never received culture training	3	1	2
Lack of command support for culture training	3	1	2
Belief that immersion is the best type of culture training	2	0	2

Note. Some comments discussed more than one theme. Therefore, the number of themes may not equal the number of comments.

Appendix F, Table 3. Suggestion themes

Theme	Overall	SOF Operators	SOF Leaders
Provide more opportunities for immersion	22	6	16
Placement of culture training (e.g., pre-mission)	19	4	15
Provide more opportunities for classroom training (includes all formal culture training)	14	2	12
More command support/emphasis of culture training (e.g., make culture training mandatory)	14	0	14
Provide more culture training opportunities	13	4	9
Other suggestions about culture training (e.g., incentives)	9	4	5
Suggestions about what culture training should cover (e.g., topics, regions)	7	4	3
Improve the quality of resources	7	0	7
Independent study time	5	3	2
Improve the quality of instruction (e.g., native speakers, cultural experts)	5	1	4
Place less importance on culture training (e.g., language is more important than culture)	5	2	3
Improve the quality of activities/curriculum (e.g., role plays)	4	2	2
Increase funding	1	0	1

Note. Some comments discussed more than one theme. Therefore, the number of themes may not equal the number of comments.